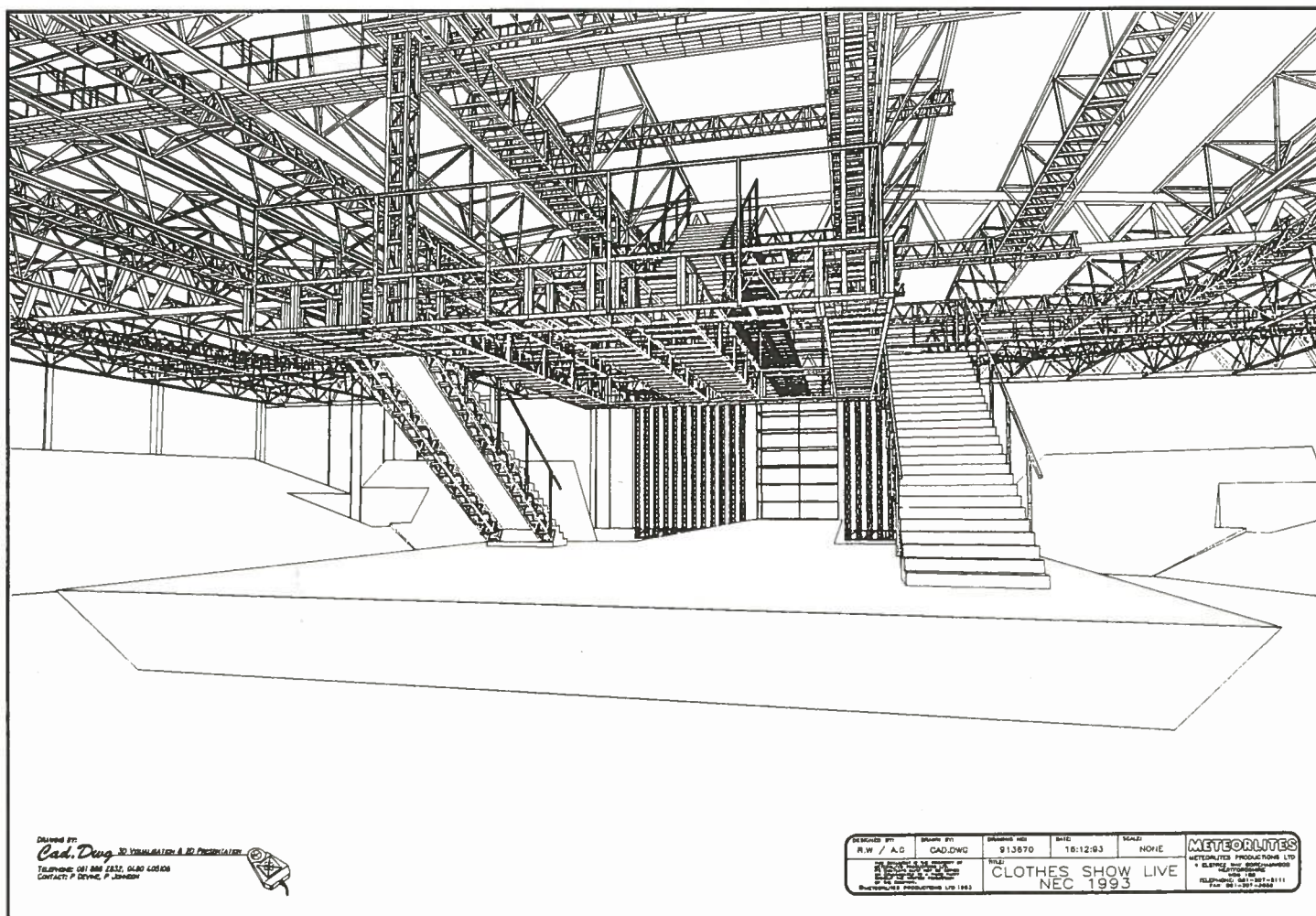


HOGGING THE CATWALK

Tony Gottelier goes first footing at The Clothes Show



One of the CAD drawings used by Meteorlites for the presentation of The Clothes Show Live at the NEC in Birmingham.

Traditionally, fashion parades have not been an opportunity for the lighting designer to show his mettle, except in terms of the skill required in keeping a high and even level of light on the platform and possibly calling followspot cues. Let's face it, normally it's a whitewash. The concept of the fashion show as a performance, where the clothes and the models are all just part of a wider entertainment concept, is something relatively new and presumably anathema to the catwalks of Paris or Milan. (Though Jean-Paul Gaultier, Antony Price and Vivienne Westwood might disagree). So, such a show, when it comes along, is quite a liberating experience for the lighting designer. Such a show is the Clothes Show Live.

Based very much on the 'larger than life personality' of Jeff Banks, the Oliver Twist of the fashion world, the Clothes Show is a phenomenon. Growing out of the BBC television programme, it has spawned its own monthly magazine and an annual fashion market where the punters can actually buy things off the stalls. It is this market-show, now at the NEC in Birmingham each December, which has created the 'Live' catwalk performance which runs concurrently throughout.

The whole performance, which is produced by Roger Castles for the BBC at Pebble Mill and sponsored by Lloyds Bank, lasts about 20 minutes and runs back-to-back throughout, with just time between shows to change audiences. Content is reminiscent of a cross between a rock concert and traditional pantomime. The first performance is traditionally recorded for broadcast as 'The

Clothes Show Live' in the programme's familiar Sunday night slot. For TV lighting director Stan Snape, who has lit the 'Clothes' fashion show for the past two years, it must be a bit like suddenly finding that you are designing the lighting for the Winter Olympics, though on a slightly smaller scale. "It's always a joy to be able to do something theatrical," Stan told me. The mandatory 'in your

face' sound package was conceived and supplied by The Music Company.

In fact, Snape brought in some heavyweight help both in terms of men and machines to ensure a spectacular result. He got his equipment through Ronan Willson's Meteorlites, who designed the truss and in turn brought in Paul Devine, better known for his work with Iron Maiden, to design



The big hat parade which was accompanied by subtle colour blends on the stage side trussing features.



Saturated colours as the lift descends.

the moving elements; 64 Intellabeams were co-opted as the main lighting hoofers, plus 30 Pan Command ColorFaders - all of which necessitated two Wholehogs, with the second being used for the Faders, but otherwise operating virtually as a traditional desk. Virtuoso moving light designer Richard Knight flew back from his stint on the LA version of Sunset Boulevard to take charge of the programming and to drive one of the Wholehogs.

Within the hall the massive catwalk thrust out from stage-side wings which, at the start of the show, carried kabuki drops emblazoned with the prancing horse symbolic of the sponsor. Later they were to reveal vertical rows of polished trusses to form a light enhancing backdrop for the subtle effects of the banks of ColorFaders at the foot. Pallas 1k top-cycs were lined above, while two Thomas Par 36 DWE 4-lights lurked in the wings for back lighting. Over the catwalks, cross rows of

Par Cans were matched at either end with 700HX I-beams. The same combination was mirrored around the huge square perimeter truss, which hangs above the arena seating, and also supported the PA system.

At the down-stage end of the walk, a second performance area was created, again with a perimeter truss. If you thought this was solely for the models to do their twirls, you would be wrong. For, using the concealed, overhead house walkway as a people feed, a descending platform was installed with two folding stairways lowering down to the structure below. This was the piece that owed its existence to the Ronan Willson/ Paul Devine combined design effort. Throw in a bunch of concealed ASLs under the stair-treads, the odd pinch of a ColorFader or four, plus ten each of Thomas 8-lights and Birdie battens; add a good dollop of smoke - stir, and simmer - and you have

the recipe for the essential collective intake of breath, as the next arrival on the planet touches down.

There were other moments like this, not least when the Lightning Strike, my first public view of the 70kW (yes 70kW) beast in a performance situation, hit the spot that other stroboscopic devices cannot reach. Known by the crew as FBL, for reasons which are far beyond my linguistic abilities to explain, this was a last minute addition of Stan's. Indeed, so last minute that he never got around to providing the extra 200 Amp supply said to be necessary at the point of discharge! Never mind, it did a cracking good job, no hum, and there was really no call for a spectacular burn out as well. John Coppen and David Morphy of Cirro Lite, who sell this US-manufactured killer-light here, must have a hot-selling item on their hands. No Rock Show will be complete



The Village People number, I-beams count down the walk.



Up-front, the Village People set.

without one in future.

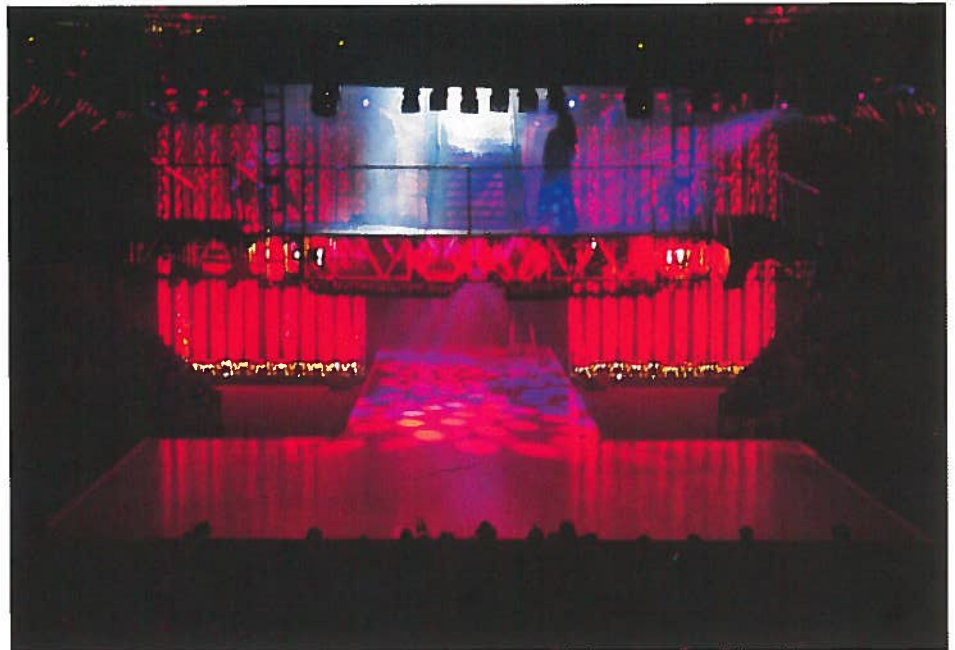
Such moments as these were countered by several marked by the sheer beauty of the lighting in its dutiful pose of showing-off the clothes, literally, 'in the best light'. Of these, I have marked out Snape's background lighting for the side-stage flats, where he used the ColorFaders in combination with the zigzagged truss angles to magical effect and Knight's breathtaking I-beam treatment for a white look. In this scene, white gobos shuffled and shifted in gusts on the surface of the walk, in a sparkling, crystalline symbiosis evocative of winter.

Now to the inevitable question - why two Hogs? Snape told me that in the previous year they had tackled the show with one Wholehog and various conventional desks. "You couldn't move up here for desks, it was really an impossible situation," he said. Apparently, Richard Knight had gone to PLASA that year with the specific idea of evaluating the new moving light desk, having previously been committed to Vari*Lite's Artisan. "It was love at first touch!" said Richard. As Snape watched what Knight was able to achieve with the new board, he realised that it would handle conventional lights and scrollers just as well, and save on plotting time and space to boot. "In a way, this year's show belongs to the Wholehog," said Stan modestly. This last December they had the ColorFaders instead of scrollers, but the control problems were, if anything, more complicated. So Stan had all the conventionals and the ColorFaders on Hog One, and Richard the 64 I-beams on the other. And the looks came slick and fast despite the limited set-up time which inhibited the use of the 'Go' button.

At the end of the day, despite the 6000 channels on offer, it is clearly not desirable, in the typical time available for programming prior to such events, to use such a board as 'virtual' show controller, and there are many potential advantages of running two such boards side-by-side. Which must make Hog distributors AC Lighting feel very happy indeed, to say nothing of the piggies themselves! The dimmer racks were Avolites.

In any event, the three shows I saw ran without a hitch and were received with much enthusiasm by the young, predominately female audience. The only problem arose when the 'house' failed to turn off the arenas at the beginning of the performance attended by the sponsors and their guests, which left Roger Castles incandescent.

The music was an eclectic mixture, as you would expect, and the BBC's Mark Botfield and assistant Richard Meredith had done a splendid



After the kabuki drop.



Stage-side feature, and sponsors emblem.



ScreenCo's Jumbotron video screen in the main exhibition hall.



The descending platform awash with smoke.

job of recording and mixing the numbers on an Akai DD1000 for playback via six Denon CDRs. The desk was a Klark Teknik XL3. The PA system, provided by The Music Company, was all d&b Audiotechnik over the audience -F2s, B1s and 602s which TMC had calculated would deliver 110dB to all seating positions, while maintaining as far as possible a stereo image and 'hi-fi' quality. I can report that they were totally successful, despite the small size of the cabinets, indeed so successful with the SPL were they, that Stan Snape and his crew quickly called for ear protectors, even at the very back of the hall where they were perched!

Stage and catwalk monitoring were flown Turbosound TSE111s with two d&b floor wedges.

While the fashion show was in progress, ScreenCo's Jumbotron video screen transmitted footage from the catwalk, recorded by their camera crew into the main exhibition hall to give those visitors a flavour of the action. Sponsored by Citroen, a wide variety of other promotional material, information graphics and local footage were also transmitted. ScreenCo's Dave Crump had this comment: "This show highlighted the limited load-in access often found at indoor venues. Our new modular screens can offer such events high brightness screens with module-by-module flexibility of installation to solve such problems."

I had no time to walk around the merchandise stalls in this adjacent hall, though I had heard that LSD's Icons were doing their stuff on Vivienne Westwood's stand, and no doubt others from the industry had also benefited from this highly successful event. As you can tell the whole show went down a bundle with the public, so now the challenge will be what to do next year. "What comes after 64 Intellabeams?" Richard Knight asked wistfully on our way out.



Lighting designer Stan Snape with the Wholehog.

Lighting Crew:

Lighting designer-Stan Snape
Automated lighting-Richard Knight
Assistants-Paul Cook, Ian Lomaz
Hoist operator-Tony Simpson
Gaff-Andrew Stacey
Dimmer support-Dimmie Hinds
Lampies-Gareth Crockford, Simon Cooper
Carpenter-Bob Marden

Lighting Equipment

10 30-lamp MR16 battens
12 Pallas 4x1k top cysc
10 Thomas Par 36 DWE 8-light kit



The hog pen - Richard Knight with Stan Snape beyond.

2 Thomas Par 36 DWE 4-light kit
16 Par 64, long nose
22 Par 64, floor cans
60 6-lamp Par 64 bars
6 9x15 2k Cadenza
1 Quartzcolor 4k HMI Sirio
1 Lightning Strike
2 Wholehog desks
1 Avolites 72-way ELCB dimmer system
2 Avolites 48-way dimmer systems
2 Rosco Smoke machine
1 JEM Heavy Fog machine
2 Craxoil cracked oil machine
1 8-way Clearcom system

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	-18°	Peak	377,000cd	401,800cd
		Flat	294,000cd	318,500cd
Arena Zoomspot 2000 Medium -14°	Peak	492,450cd	509,600cd	
	Flat	416,500cd	455,700cd	
	-32°	Peak	149,450cd	154,350cd
		Flat	105,350cd	122,500cd

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THE CLOTHES SHOW LIVE AT THE NEC, BIRMINGHAM

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- Lampo joins L+SI's Italian Collection
- Technical story of the Tower Bridge Exhibit
- Graham Walne at Stratford East's refurbished Theatre Royal
- Ken Dibble nominates his best in sound for 93

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